

Scripture

vs.

Tradition

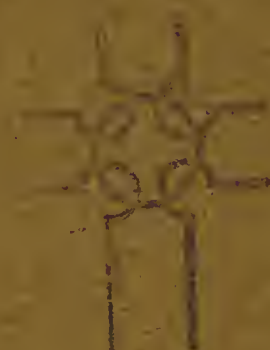
By

H. W. DAVIS

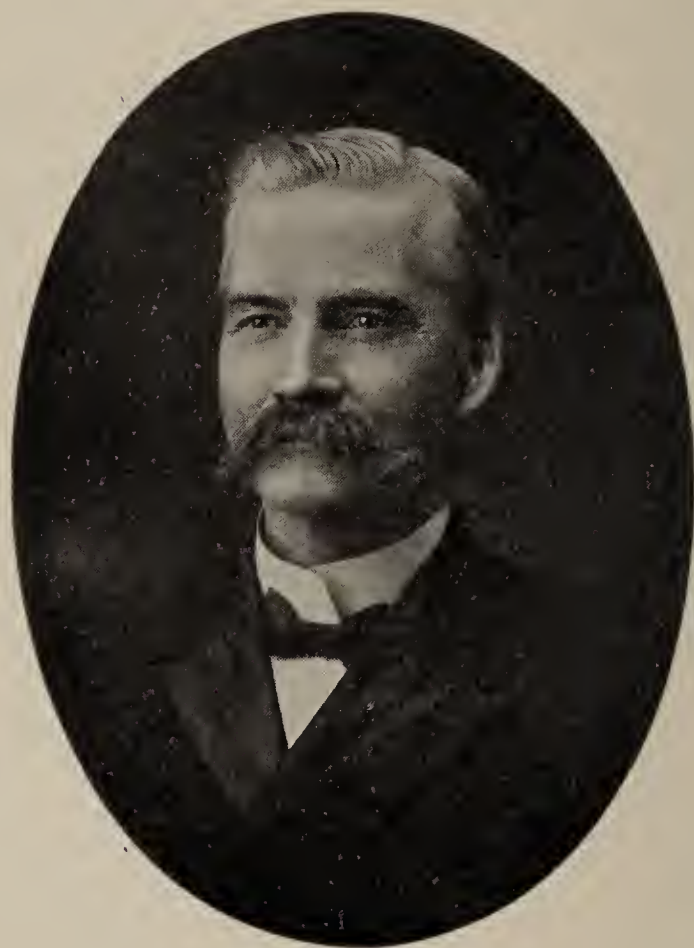
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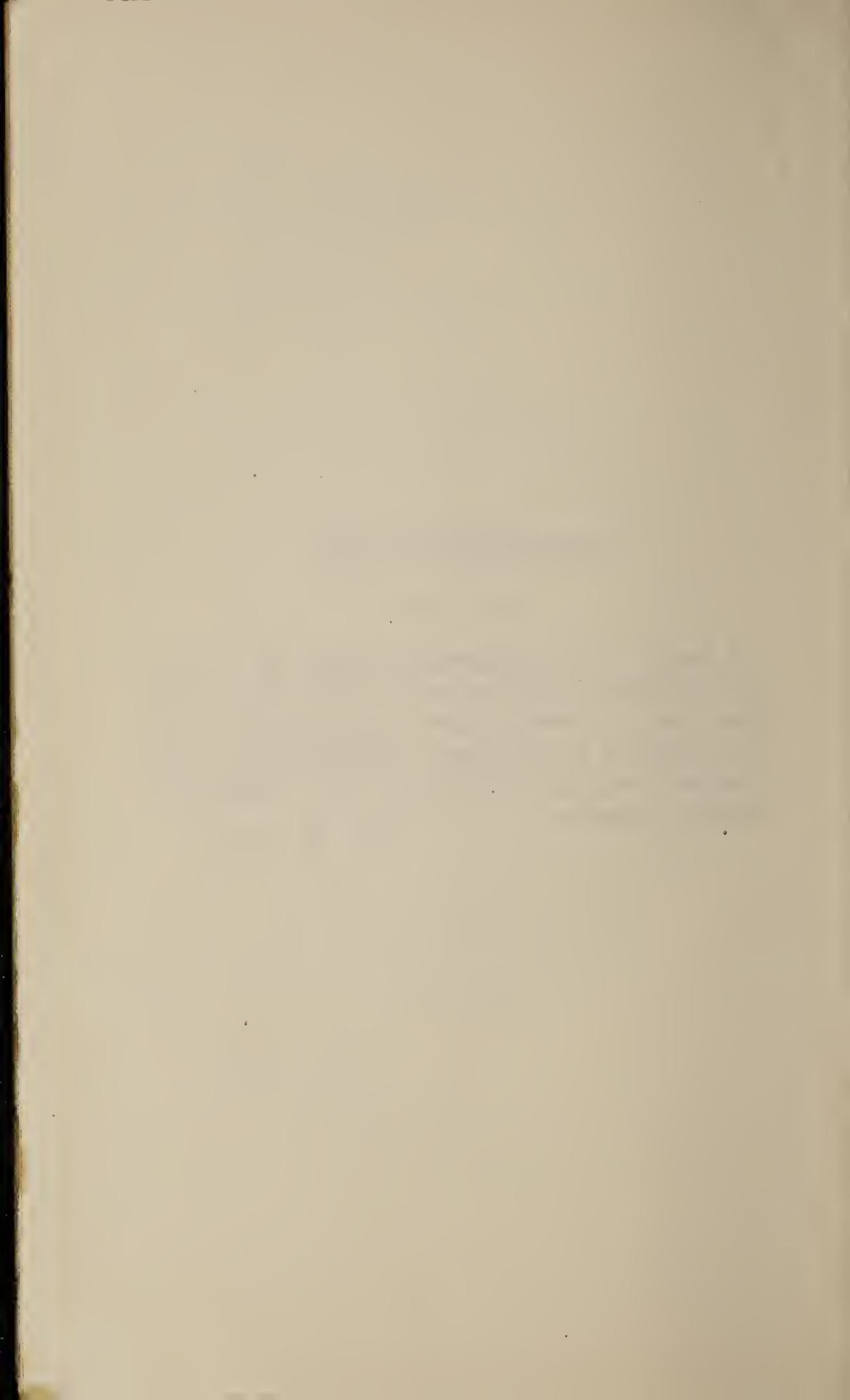


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INTRODUCTION

I desire in the following pages, by use of two representative names, Creed-man and Free-man, in controversial style, to set forth the belief of Conditional Immortality and kindred truths, and to meet the objections usually presented

H. W. Davis.



CHAPTER I.

Creedman: Good morning Bro. Freeman. I have called to talk with you concerning those strange notions which I hear, are leading you away from the Orthodox faith of the church.

Freeman: I am very glad you have come. I desire the truth above all else, and if a friendly discussion will show me that I am deceived I shall be very grateful.

Creedman: That is my object in calling, and I am pleased to be received so kindly. I feel that it is a very serious thing to be led away from the teachings of the Church into the maze of error and new ideas. Why not be satisfied with the creed of the Church as adopted so long ago?

Freeman: Dear Bro. Creedman: I read (Prov. 4: 18), "That the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more until the perfect day." Dear Brother, may I ask you, Are not the Scriptures the only original source of religious information and instruction, given to us of God?

Creedman: I understand the Scriptures to be the basis of all Christian doctrine, when correctly understood.

Freeman: But Bro. Creedman, what general rule would you suggest, whereby we may understand the Scripture correctly?

Creedman: Bible students generally agree, that scripture should be taken in its literal sense wherever it can be without violence to its self, and to the general rules of literature. It is considered unsafe to base a belief or doctrine on a figurative or symbolical interpretation or upon an unexplained parable.

Freeman: I am glad for this statement from you as it gives a basis for our discussion. Now Bro. Creedman, what are the points on which you think me astray?

Creedman: Why! the doctrines of those Adventists, which you seem to be so interested in of late. I do not see how you can be so taken with them. You cannot be aware, that they have little or no standing or influence in church circles, and are considered erratic and unsound in faith. Then there are so few of them. Their numbers are very small.

Freeman: My Bro. Creedman, have you been to hear them?

Creedman: Certainly not! I do not believe in running after every new thing that comes along.

Freeman: But did not Paul say in 1 Thess. 5: 21, "Prove all things and hold fast that which is good?" We also read in St. John 7: 51, "Doth our law judge a man before it hear him?" I know well, Bro. Creedman the feelings and attitude of the popular churches towards this people. I know also that we are

small in number. But did not the early church occupy exactly the same position in relation to the popular systems of religion in their time? You remember that the Jews in Rome came to Paul and said (Acts 28:22), "But we desire to hear what thou thinkest, for as concerning this sect we know that every where it is spoken against." Once it was said of Paul (Acts 17:6), "These that have turned the world upside down; have come hither also." Paul said in 1 Cor. 4:13, "We are made as the filth of the world and are the off-scourings of all things unto this day." You say, they are so few in number. Do numbers count for virtue and truth? Let us see. Twelve spies were sent to spy out the land, and reported ten against two. How did numbers count that time? Look again. Eight hundred and fifty prophets are gathered at Mount Carmel. Educated, cultured, state-supported, court-fed, united and harmonious, on one side; and only Elijah, one of the inhabitants of Gilead, on the other. But his prayer of faith brought down more fire than the whole crowd of popular prophets. So numbers do not always count.

If numbers and rapid growth are evidence of virtue, then the modern churches should take off their hats to "Christian Science" (falsely so called), for they seemingly have by their silly, meaningless expressions, made

more progress in numbers than any of them.

Dear Bro. Creedman, the time was, when the church which you represent was no stronger numerically than are those people whom you now disdain.

Creedman: That may be true but the points of faith which distinguish Adventists, are radically different from those held by other Protestant churches.

Freeman: I well know that Adventists, with no creed but the Bible, are unable to accept the traditional dogmas, brought out of the Roman Catholic Church by some of the reformers, and which are now accepted by the Protestant churches without Scripture to sustain them.

Creedman: I am certain you are wrong in imputing to the Protestant churches the errors of Romanism; and ask you to name such belief.

Freeman: I can easily do that; I. The belief of Infant Baptism; for as you well know there is not a passage of scripture, or a recorded instance of it in the early Church. II. The belief of "Natural Immortality," or as some express it, "The Immortality of the Soul," which is the very foundation of the Roman Catholic belief, in the invocation and intercession of saints; as well as the doctrine of Purgatory.

Creedman: Oh! oh! This is terrible. This

is next to blasphemy. To deny the immortality of the soul is but little short of infidelity. Why! the belief of the immortality of the soul is held by nearly all the world. In fact, it has been well nigh the universal belief of the world, for three thousand years. The Egyptians were the first to teach it. Confucius is said to have visited Egypt and carried the belief to the East. Socrates, Plato, and Cicero were champions of it, and their disciples introduced it into the Christian Church in the later part of the second century and from that time it has been considered the fundamental doctrine of the Christian Church.

Freeman: My dear Brother, I am truly grateful to you for this history of the progress and spread of the doctrine of natural immortality. But pardon my curiosity; I am wondering why this doctrine if true, was revealed to pagan philosophers for a thousand years or more before it found an entrance into Jewish literature? If this doctrine were true why was it not revealed to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? And why did Moses never teach it? Why were David and the prophets silent concerning it? But on the other hand if it is a Satanic delusion; if it is the "doctrine of devils," would not the heathen and pagan philosophers and the apostate church be the very ones to receive it first?

Creedman: Oh! you shock me. Just to think that anyone in this age of learning should suggest that the belief of the immortality of the soul was a Satanic delusion. You seem to have lost all respect for the sacred traditions of the past.

Freeman: I trust not more so than the Saviour who said in Mark 7: 7, 8, 13, "Howbeit in vain do they worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men....making the word of God of none effect through your traditions." It is very easy to prove that the belief of the immortality of the soul is of Satanic origin. In Gen. 3: 4 we read, "And the serpent said unto the woman, *Ye shall not surely die.*" Remember this was the beginning of the controversy. God had said, "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The serpent said, "Thou shalt not surely die." This was the beginning of the discussion of the "life and death" question, and I prefer to line up with God. If you persist in remaining on the serpent's side because it has become incorporated in the creeds and traditions of the Church; I pity you and am very sorry.

Creedman: Oh, oh! this is terrible! I will not listen to another word. Such a reflection on the Christian Church. I am completely

dumbfounded, I cannot seem to recall to mind the scripture to meet your arguments; good day sir.



CHAPTER II.

Creedman: Good morning Bro. Freeman, I have been very much ashamed of my effort in winning you back to the Church. For I realize fully that I utterly failed to satisfy myself, or to convince you of your errors.

Freeman: I am glad indeed to have you come again, and will gladly receive any evidence from the Word of God that you may present for my consideration.

Creedman: I have taken more time for preparation, and have given the subject more study than ever before. To be honest, I will admit that I have been much disappointed in my investigation, for the Scripture does not read as I supposed it did, and I have not been able to find much that I was looking for in the language that I had in mind. But, however, I have found much to sustain my belief, and I would like to call your attention to the creation of man. I think that is the way to get at the truth in relation to his nature and immortality. God formed the body of man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils an immortal Spirit. This it seems to me settles for ever the whole question.

Freeman: Yes, Bro. Creedman, it would if the Scripture read like that. But it does not. You have only stated your belief in the mat-

ter; simply read your own thought into the passage you tried to quote. Now this is how it reads, "The Lord God formed man [you said man's body] of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life [you said an immortal spirit], and man became a living soul." Notice the real man, the personality, was formed of dust, and called man before he was given the "breath of life." Notice: that it required the union of the dust-formed man and the breath of life to produce the living soul. So in the event of dissolution or death: "When the dust returns to the earth as it was and the Spirit to God who gave it;" there could no longer exist the *living soul*. For if the union of the two produces it, then the dissolution of the two would result in its ceasing to exist.

Creedman: But, Bro. Freeman, you are claiming that the real man, the person, the ego, adheres in the physical, whereas it is the belief of the Church that the body, is only the dwelling-place of the man. That the body is no more the man, than a man's house is the man.

Freeman: I know well, that is the popular belief and I wait for proof. But as you know, I read these facts from the Scripture account of creation which are clear that *man* was formed of the dust of the ground, and called man and referred to by the pronoun *his*, be-

fore he received the breath of life. Then we read in Gen. 3: 19, "In the sweat of *thy* face, shalt *thou* eat bread till *thou* return unto the ground, for out of it wast *thou* taken: for dust *thou* art, and unto dust shalt *thou* return." Now if these personal pronouns do not refer to the personality, to the real Adam, then there is no meaning in language.

These same facts were clearly demonstrated by the Saviour, at the grave of Lazarus. 'The Saviour inquired, Where have ye laid *Him*,—Lazarus? He ordered the stone rolled away, and turning to the grave, "cried with a loud voice: Lazarus come forth." From where did Lazarus come forth? The grave? Then he was in the grave; for the Saviour had the stone rolled away that he might call him forth from the dead. This was in harmony with his former statement in John 5: 28: "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth." Remember this, there is not a reference in Scripture where soul or spirit, is represented as the person, apart from the body.

Creedman: But do you not see Bro. Freeman, that by this evidence you are upsetting and destroying the established faith of the ages, and the scholarship of the Church?

Freeman: My dear Bro. Creedman, what did Paul mean in saying (Rom. 3: 4), "Yea,

let God be true, but every man a liar?" And what did the Saviour mean when he said: "I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth; that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes; even so Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." My dear Bro. Creedman, I cannot receive error because of its antiquity or because it has come down to us through the Church from the dark ages.

Creedman: We have wandered far from creation, let us consider it further. Did not God breath a part of himself into man at creation? If so, then is not every man a part of God, and must he not live as long as God lives?

Freeman: Your premise is unsound; man is a creature not, a part of the Creator. If man was a part of God and because of that undying, would it not also prevent his sinning? If the possession of the "breath of life" made man divine, would not the same breath of life do the same for the animals? For they too, possess the breath of life. See Gen. 6: 17: "Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh, wherein is the *breath of life* from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die." Also, ch. 7: 14: "And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the *breath of life*." Also, verse 22: "All

in whose nostrils was the *breath of life*, of all that was in the dry land died." In Eccl. 3: 19, 20, we read: "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts: even one thing befalleth them: as one dieth, so dieth the other; yea they have all one breath: so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast, for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, all turn to dust again." These scriptures make it plain that so far as natural immortality is concerned man is not above the animals.

Creedman: I never thought it possible for you to treat the sacredly cherished belief of the Church with such disrespect.

Freeman: My dear Brother, the Church of Rome felt the same toward Luther and his co-laborers in the reformation. We must remember error is error, no matter how fondly it is cherished, while truth is truth if no one believes it. Our believing or disbelieving does not change or in any way affect the truth. But it does vitally affect us. Remember the Scriptures are the standard of appeal; not tradition.

Creedman: There are other points in relation to the creation of man I wish you to notice. The fact that God made man with superior intelligence, far above the animals, is considered strong evidence of his immortality. It is not the material eye that sees. It

is not the material ear that hears. It is not the material brain that thinks and is conscious. But it is the immortal soul which uses our eyes as windows; our ears as telephone receivers; and our brain as the musician uses the instrument of music. This is very conclusive and satisfactory evidence of the immortality of man. And I am willing to "rest" the case upon it.

Freeman: I freely admit that your point seems to be plausible, and I know it is very satisfactory to the superficial thinker. But it will not stand investigation. Let us turn on the light and see it clearly. If consciousness and intelligence are due to the possession of immortality; why are some more intelligent than others? Are they more immortal? If immortality is the basis of intelligence why is childhood and old age deficient? Are there degrees of immortality? If as you say it is the immortal soul that sees through our eyes, and hears through our ears, and thinks with our brains, what is it then that looks through the eyes and hears through the ears and uses the brain of the animals? have they too, immortality? If immortality is the basis or cause of intelligence, why is it that a calf six days old without it, has more intelligence than a child six weeks old with it? Do you not see Bro. Creedman, that if God could endow the the animal creation with sufficient

intelligence to fill their place in life perfectly, without immortality, that by giving mankind a more perfect, or a more highly organized brain, could fit them for the various conditions of life as they should need.

Creedman: I must now leave you again, and I hardly know what to say, but I am sorely disappointed, I realize that I have entirely failed in the accomplishment of my purpose, and am more bewildered than before. But I cannot give in that the time honored Church which I represent can be wrong. But I will take more time and make a thorough study of the whole question and see you again.

CHAPTER III.

Creedman: Good morning Bro. Freeman, I felt that I must see you again. As I found on giving my attention to the subject that I had not used the Scripture evidence at all to prove natural immortality but had only depended on the faith of our church. Now I wish to prove that the Church is correct in their belief, by the Scriptures; and win you back to the fold from which you have strayed.

Freeman: I am very glad you have come, and hope you may be able to produce Scripture evidence to carry me with you. For it is no desirable experience to be separated from those that I have been associated with in Christian work for so long. I am very desirous if going astray, to be corrected and put right. I will gladly give due consideration to Scripture evidence.

Creedman: I am certainly pleased with the true Christian spirit you have manifested. Now let me call your attention to the proof we have in the Saviour's promise to the "penitent thief" (Luke 23: 43), of consciousness and reward in death: "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Freeman: I fear you are to be disappointed. in this passage when you consider it closely. First, what did the thief request? "Lord re-

member me *when* thou *comest* into thy *kingdom*.' How could this criminal offer such a prayer as this, expressive of such wonderful faith? It did not look as though Jesus of Nazareth would ever come in his kingdom. The penitent thief must have been inspired by the Holy Spirit. If so, then the answer must be in harmony with the prayer. The prayer was not, to be with him in death, but when Christ should come in his kingdom. Did Christ come in his kingdom at his death? Certainly not, for it is at his second advent that the Saviour is to come in his kingdom. See Matt. 13: 4: "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his *kingdom* all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.... Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Matt. 25: 35: "Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the *kingdom* prepared for you from the foundation of the world." But, you say, Christ promised to take him to Paradise that day. You are mistaken. Read it again, "Verily I say unto thee to-day,"—that is he made the promise that day, that eventful day, that day of darkness and doubt when mighty faith was required to pray such a prayer, "Verily I say unto thee to-day, shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Paradise was on the earth. Man

was excluded from it and from the tree of life by sin. But when Christ shall come again they that overcome shall have a right to the "tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." Rev. 2: 7.

Remember that the Saviour said three days later to Mary, "Touch me not for I am not yet ascended to my Father." Again, remember the Saviour taught that rewards were to be given at his second coming, not at death. Read Matt. 16: 27, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels and *then* he shall reward every man according to his works." Luke 4: 14, "For thou shalt be recompensed *at* the resurrection of the just." Rev. 22: 12, "Behold I come quickly and my reward is with me, to reward every man according as his work shall be." My dear Brother, modern punctuation has misled you in understanding the promise of Christ to the penitent thief.

Creedman: Well you will not deny that Paul wished to die so that he could go to be with Christ; which he said was "far better."

Freeman: My dear Bro. Creedman, you have unconsciously read into this passage your own thought; making it teach what Paul never thought of teaching. This passage is Phil. 1: 21, 23. Paul said, "For me to live is Christ," that is, by living he would continue his labor of love for Christ. "To die is

gain," by dying he would escape the persecution and suffering, and be at rest. "Yet what I shall choose I wot not [know not], for I am in a strait betwixt two." Here the apostle says plainly that between living or dying he does not know which to choose, he is in a strait betwixt the two, which he shall choose he does not know. Then, how can he say in the same breath that he desired to die? He continues by saying, "Having a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better." Far better than what? Why: either living here and suffering or dying. But you ask, How could he be with Christ without dying? Please read 1 Thess. 4: 17, "Then we [Paul includes himself] which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be ever with the Lord."

That Paul believed death to be an enemy and not an experience to be desired is proven in this same letter (chap. 2: 27), where Paul was writing of the sickness of Epaphroditus, saying, "For indeed he was sick nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have had sorrow upon sorrow." If Paul had desired death; and had thought it far better he could not have called it a mercy for God to prevent his fellow laborer from dying. Paul was desiring the redemption of his body, not

redemption from the body. Read Rom. 8: 22, 23: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, and not only they, but ourselves also.... Even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our *body*." Paul did not desire the coming of an enemy. Remember he said (1 Cor. 15: 26), "The last *enemy* that shall be destroyed is *death*." Paul expresses his hope and expectation (2 Tim. 4: 7, 8), "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me, at *that day* and not to me only but unto all them also who love his *appearing*."

Creedman: But surely you cannot love to think of your friends who have died, sleeping in the cold, cruel grave, year after year.

Freeman: But, Bro. Creedman, why should I expect a pleasant result from sin? Death as we see it and realize it is simply the expression of God's abhorrence of sin. If we wish to know how God feels towards sin, just look into the face of death. Then again, if death is the gate to glory and reward we must be very grateful to the devil, for he made it possible; for he opened the door of death. There would have been no death if he had not introduced sin into the world. So if saints have gone to their reward through death, they should be praising the devil for letting them

in. You can't see how? Why, this way (Rom. 5: 12), "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men." Read again, Heb. 2: 14, "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise, himself took part of the same, that through *death*, he might destroy him that had the *power of death* that is the devil."

Creedman: But would it be right or just to allow the prophets, saints and martyrs to lie neglected and forgotten in dust, for thousands of years?

Freeman: But to them it is only a moment. Their eyes close in death, this world fades from their mental vision, the next moment of consciousness to them is the sounding of the archangel's trump and they spring into endless life. But whether we approve of God's plan or not it will not be changed, and the Scripture plainly teaches that the prophets and saints are not yet rewarded. Paul before King Agrippa (Acts 26: 6), said the consummation of the hope of the promise made of God unto the Fathers was still future. In Rev. 11: 18 we read, "And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, both small and great."

This is the time the dead were to be judged. How could they be rewarded before they were judged? Read again of the great list of worthies (Heb. 11: 39, 40), "And these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the *promise*: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us, should not be made perfect." Then remember the words of Peter in Acts 2: 34, "For David is not ascended into heaven." And it is evident that he did not expect to, for he said in Psalm 17: 15, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness." We also read in John 3: 13, "And *no man* hath ascended up to heaven." Dear Bro. Creedman, I have never been able to find in Scripture the least evidence that death is the time, or heaven the place of reward.

Creedman: It is evident then that you have overlooked the account of the Rich Man and Lazarus, receiving their reward and punishment at death.

Freeman: Oh, you refer to the parable of Dives and Lazarus.

Creedman: I do not call it a parable. If I called it a parable, there might be a difference of opinion as to what it was designed to teach, but if a statement of actual facts, that took place in the actual experience of two men

then there is certain and positive truth that no one can deny.

Freeman: My dear Bro. Creedman, I am glad to see that you are changing from your former leaning on the faith and scholarship of the Church, to your own personal opinion, for the scholarship of the Church call this a parable. See Smith's Bible Dictionary, page 235, speaking of the belief of the intermediate state, says: "In holding this view, main reliance is placed on the parable of Dives and Lazarus; but it is impossible to ground the proof of an important theological doctrine on a passage which confessedly abounds in Jewish metaphors." But I am willing to consider the passage as a historical account, for argument's sake, and to show you its absurdity.

Here is the Rich Man, enjoying the blessings of life. He is not accused of wickedness or wrong doing unless it is sinful to "fare sumptuously every day." The beggar is laid at his gate full of sores. The narrative claims no virtue for the beggar, unless it was an act of virtue to let the dogs lick his sores. Both of these men died and were carried; one to his burial and the other to "Abraham's bosom." Now notice, the terms soul or spirit do not occur in the narrative. I know you believe that it was the soul of Lazarus that was carried by the angels, but the language of the narrative will not allow that construction.

“The rich man died and was buried,” “The beggar died and was carried.” Now if this is a statement of facts then, whatever part was buried of the rich man, the same part of the beggar was carried by angels. If the body of the rich man was buried then it was the body of the beggar that was carried to the bosom of Abraham. And if this is a literal statement of fact, then the bosom of Abraham was of wonderful dimensions, and as a matter of fact, Lazarus was there bodily for the rich man saw him in the bosom of Abraham. As a spirit is invisible he must have been there bodily or he could not have been seen. Again, he was there bodily, for he was requested to dip his finger in the water.

Then as a statement of fact we have the location of the saved and lost within sight and hearing of each other. Those who are enjoying the felicity of Abraham’s bosom, can see the writhing tortures of the lost and the leaping of sulphuric flames, and hear their agonizing screams and still be supremely happy. Bro. Creedman is this the happiness you are looking forward to?

Creedman: I am afraid I shall have to admit that the language is figurative. It could be figurative and still not a parable. I had always believed it to be actual history; because of the positive language of the Saviour, “There was a certain rich man.”

Freeman: But Bro. Creedman, in the first verse of this same chapter, in the parable of the unjust steward the identical expression occurs, "There was a certain rich man." You would not think of calling that a historical account; then why the other? But as you insist that it is not a parable but figurative language let us see if that suits you better? You wish to remove the thought of a bodily existence from both the saved and lost, and have only the souls represented in joy and misery. Then the narrative must be considered like this. And in hell the spirit of the rich man lifted up its eyes being in torments and saw with spiritual sight the spirit of Abraham with the spirit of Lazarus in its spiritual bosom, and cried spiritually, Father Abraham's spirit send Lazarus' spirit to dip its finger in spiritual water to cool my spirit's tongue, for my spirit is spiritually tormented in this spiritual flame.

Creedman: Oh! Stop! Stop! You know better than that. Don't try to make it ridiculous.

Freeman: I am not trying to make it ridiculous, but what can you expect when you take a parable and try to understand it as a narrative. Now I wish you to realize this one fact, that whether the passage is taken literally or figuratively, the location of the two characters is the same and they are still

within sight and hearing of each other, and each know what is going on in the other place.

Creedman: Terrible as it may seem, I have always supposed that this Scripture taught that rewards and punishments were received at death and conscious suffering or happiness were the experience of all who have died.

Freeman: I have already proven that rewards are given at the second advent of Christ; at the judgment, by many passages. I will now give you more to show that the parable of the rich man and Lazarus cannot teach the conscious existence of the dead. Read Psa. 6: 5, "For in death there is no remembrance of thee." Psa. 115: 17, "The dead praise not the Lord." Psa. 146: 3, 4, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help, his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish." Eccl. 9: 5, "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything.... Also their love and their hatred and their envy, is now perished." Now Bro. Creedman, how can you in view of these emphatic statements still persist in believing that the passage referring to Dives and Lazarus is not a parable, and that the dead are conscious and in misery or happiness?

Creedman: Well, I hardly know what to say but if it is a parable it must have a mean-

ing; some lesson to teach, and can you throw any light on what it does mean?

Freeman: I have given this parable much study and will give you some points for your consideration. First, It must not be explained so as to conflict with the literal teaching of Scripture, such as we have been reading. Then the context shows that this parable like many others was spoken to the Jews and not to the disciples, which would not have been the case if it had been intended to teach rewards and punishments. Some think the rich man was intended to represent the Jewish national or Levitical priesthood which died at the cross as a divine institution, and its adherents down to the present hour, are suffering torments of reproach and derision. While the beggar at the rich man's gate represented the Saviour, the great priest "forever after the order of Melchisedec." Who after his suffering and death was exalted to "the right hand of the Majesty on high," and the great gulf fixed, prevents national restoration of the Jews to God's favor.

Creedman: If man was not created immortal; upon what ground or basis will he receive everlasting life?

Freeman: I am pleased with this question and will answer with Scripture. In John 3: 16 we read, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever

believeth on him should not *perish* but have *everlasting life*." Rom. 6: 23, "But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 John 5: 11, "And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." Col. 3: 4, "When Christ who is *our life* shall appear; then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

Creedman: All my life long I have heard the immortality of the soul, and of going to heaven when we die, and believed it as I believed the Bible and supposed the Bible taught it. And even now, after you have met every objection and presented such an array of Scripture evidence, still I cannot bring myself to believe that the scholarship of the Church are all wrong.

Freeman: The scholarship of the Christian Church are not all wrong. I can name many eminent scholars in the different branches of the Christian Church who boldly dispute the claim of natural immortality.

Creedman: But why have not all received this light and truth; if it is so clear?

Freeman: For the very same reason that you have never received it; and for the reason that you still cling to the old dogmas after you know that they have been exploded.

Creedman: But you have not referred to one passage of Scripture that contains the

word immortality, I do not think that a fair way to deal with the subject.

Freeman: I will freely admit that it is unfair to leave out of the discussion the Scriptures containing the term immortality, for if man is immortal by nature it is reasonable to expect to find it taught in those passages where the word occurs, so I will examine every passage containing this word. Turn to 1 Tim. 6: 15, 16, where we read: "King of kings and Lord of lords who *only hath* immortality." Need we look farther? If God *only hath* immortality why should we expect man to be in possession of it? But read again how it has been brought within our reach (2 Tim. 1: 10), "But now is made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Notice, Paul does not say it was brought to light by Adam through creation. Read again in Rom. 2: 8, "By patient continuance in well doing we seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life." Now if we are in possession of it now by nature, why do we seek for it by grace? Read again in 1 Cor. 15: 51, "Behold I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be

changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.'" Now Bro. Creedman, these five passages are the only places the word immortality is found in Scripture. Now let me sum up these points in this way: (1) God only hath it. (2) It has been brought to light or within our reach by Christ through the gospel. (3) We may receive it by patient continuance in well doing. (4) and (5) We are to receive it at the last trump, when the dead are raised incorruptible. When death is swallowed up in victory.

Creedman: Well you seem to have swept the board clean. I don't think I will continue my efforts. For what difference does it make anyway, whether one believes in conditional immortality or that we are immortal by nature?

Freeman: If it does not make any difference, why did you come here? What did you come to labor with me for? If it does not make any difference, why have we suffered ridicule, slander and persecution for fifty years from the popular churches? If it does not make any difference, why have the churches expelled both ministry and laymen

for believing it? You know that it does make a difference, but this is simply a smooth way you have of getting off when you are unwilling to acknowledge the truth publicly. But I am glad you raised this point, for before you leave I wish to show you what the difference is.

1. Your belief in natural immortality *robs* Jesus Christ of the glory of his office, as the giver of eternal life. If you possess it by nature then He is not the giver.

2. Your belief in natural immortality has been and is the cause of much of the infidelity of the world.

Creedman: I cannot understand how you make that out.

Freeman: Why, in this way: You reason, and teach that man is immortal; he is to exist some where through all eternity. The good in infinite happiness, the bad in eternal torment. And the supposition that eternal torment of the wicked is taught in Scripture, has caused thousands to turn their backs on God and the Bible.

Creedman: There now, this is just what I have been expecting you would do. You are denying the plain statement of Christ. He said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Oh, how can you dispute the plain teaching of Christ?

Freeman: You are greatly mistaken as you

will soon see. I am glad to take the word of Christ for all it says but in your mind you read into it, what it does not say. I fully believe the punishment for sin will be everlasting, but not everlasting torment. In the passage referred to, the duration of punishment is clearly stated but not the nature. But Paul states in 2 Thess. 1: 8, both the duration and the character of the punishment in these words: "Who shall be punished with everlasting *destruction* from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power." Remember there is a vast difference between everlasting *destruction* and everlasting preservation in suffering. The Scripture no where states that suffering is the penalty of sin. The original penalty was death. Paul said in Rom. 6: 23, "The wages of sin is death." Sinners will suffer in being put to death but suffering in itself does not constitute the punishment. In Jas. 1: 15 we read, "Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." This is the "second death" of Rev. 2: 11 and 20: 14.

Creedman: But I cannot see yet, how death can be everlasting punishment: if the person is unconscious. How can he be punished and not know it?

Freeman: That would depend on the nature of the punishment. If it was suffering, it could not be, but if it is death it would be in this way: Suppose a man is put to death

and after a year is restored to life again, how long would he have been punished? Why just as long as he had remained in death. Then if he remains in death forever he is punished forever. Just as long as the righteous enjoy the blessings of the world to come, just so long the wicked are deprived of it, for "these shall go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into life eternal." Matt. 25: 46.

Creedman: Well, I surely thought I had you fast but your explanation seems straight, but I have another passage that I am sure will block your way. "And they shall be tormented forever and ever." What will you do with that?

Freeman: If you had quoted it correctly I would believe it. Now turn and read it as it is (Rev. 20: 10), "And shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." To use this disconnected, detached passage to prove the eternal torment of wicked men is a shocking mis-application of Scripture. Now read the context (verse 8), "And shall go out to deceive the nations, which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog; to gather them to battle; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and encompassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city and fire came down from

God out of heaven, and *devoured* them.” Now in this we have a clear view of the punishment of sinners, mark this, they are *devoured* by fire, not preserved and tormented.

Creedman: How then can verse 10 say they were “tormented day and night forever and ever?”

Freeman: I beg your pardon Brother, but it does not say so. Just wait and I will read the whole verse, then you will see the folly of tearing a sentence from its connection to bolster up some pre-conceived delusion. “And the devil that deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. Now notice, not a sinner there, they had all been devoured by the fire and brimstone prior to this. Only these three symbolic characters (whatever they represent) were to experience this torment and they only so long as there shall be day and night. We read in Mal. 4: 1, “For the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. . . . And ye shall tread down the wicked: for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this; saith the Lord of hosts. Dear Bro. Creedman, you

believe that Christ died for our sins; that he took the sinner's place; that he paid the debt of sin. That he paid the penalty of the broken law. Then what was that penalty? It could not have been eternal suffering or he would not have died but would have suffered eternally. "But he died the just for the unjust *being put to death in the flesh.*" 1 Peter 3: 18.

Creedman: Well I am very glad that I interrupted you in your remarks on the results of believing in natural immortality. For now I can see your position clearly, and must confess that it seems to lift the cloud of mystery, that has been very hard to see through, so please go on.

Freeman: I am very glad for your questions on the punishment of the wicked, for the supposition that the Bible teaches the terrible dogma of eternal suffering has caused more infidelity than all else besides. And I am sure the more fully you investigate the subject in the light of Scripture the clearer it will become. Your difficulty has been in following blindly the traditions of the dark ages and neglecting to study the Bible for yourself. I will now go on with my former line of thought.

3. The belief in natural immortality is also the cause and origin of the doctrine of universal salvation of the race. They say in-

asmuch as man must exist forever it is not possible for a God of love to keep his creatures in unending suffering so they have come to believe that eventually all will be brought into harmony with God. It is not strange that they revolt against blackening the character of our loving heavenly Father by making him the instigator of unbelievable cruelties.

4. If it were not for the belief of natural immortality our Roman Catholic friends would not pray to the Virgin Mary or other saints, nor would they teach the Purgatory system.

5. Modern Spiritualism with its seductive influence is wholly based on the belief of the immortality of the Soul. The same can be said of the system of Christian Science (falsely so-called), and still you ask what difference does it make?

6. But the above corrupt fruit is not all. The belief in natural immortality confuses and nulifies the greater portion of Scripture truth. It confuses one's understanding of salvation. It almost entirely neglects man and seeks to save an immaterial, invisible, immortal soul that can be realized only by imagination for its existence is unknown in Scripture teaching or science.

7. The doctrine of the "Blessed hope and glorious appearing of Christ" with its practical, purifying influence is obscured and

eclipsed by the belief of natural immortality. The same is true of the Bible doctrine of the resurrection of the dead and of general judgment. For the belief in natural immortality judges all at death so there is no need of further judgment.

8. It makes a great difference how we believe as to our understanding the nature and location of the "saints' inheritance." The belief in natural immortality leads one to expect that at death or dissolution of the body the person goes to a spirit abode in an invisible, immaterial condition and expects to find in heaven, congenial associations and conditions which are largely imaginary, as the Bible is silent as to man's experience there, for all those scriptures taken to represent conditions in heaven are descriptive of future conditions here on earth after the curse is removed and "God's will is done in earth as in heaven."

Creedman: Do you think then that the people of God will live on the earth in the future state?

Freeman: Certainly, nothing is more clearly taught in Scripture, and all would see it if their eyes were not blinded by the traditional belief of the immortality of the soul. Let me give you a few of the many scriptures to prove it. Matt. 5: 5: "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the *earth*." Then read

Rev. 5: 9, 10, "And they sung a new song saying and hast made us kings and priests unto God and we shall reign upon the *earth*." Rev. 11. 15: "And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven saying: The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever." Psa. 2: 8, 9: "Ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the *earth* for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Zech. 9: 10: "And He shall speak peace to the heathen, and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the *earth*" Dan. 7: 27: "And the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom *under* the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and all dominions shall serve and obey him." Matt. 25: 31, 34: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory. . . . Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand. Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the *kingdom* prepared for you from the foundation of the world." 2 Peter 1: 11: "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting *kingdom* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Creedman: Well, well, it is indeed strange that I have never seen these scriptures or heard them referred to before.

Freeman: No, it is not strange. The belief of that error, "the immortality of the soul," has turned your mind to death as the time, and heaven as the place of reward so you could not see the glorious truth of the second coming of Christ to reign with his saints on earth. You have often taken Rev. 21 as the beautiful description of heaven. Now look at it again, with the fog of error blown away from your mind and see it clearly. Remember that John saw in vision, what was to be in the future; so he says in verse 1, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth....and I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." I wish you to notice the "holy city, New Jerusalem" is not heaven, but comes down from God out of heaven. Read again, verse 3, "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying: Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God."

Creedman: Well, it is surprising, that I never noticed before that this was not heaven. I supposed it read that we were going where

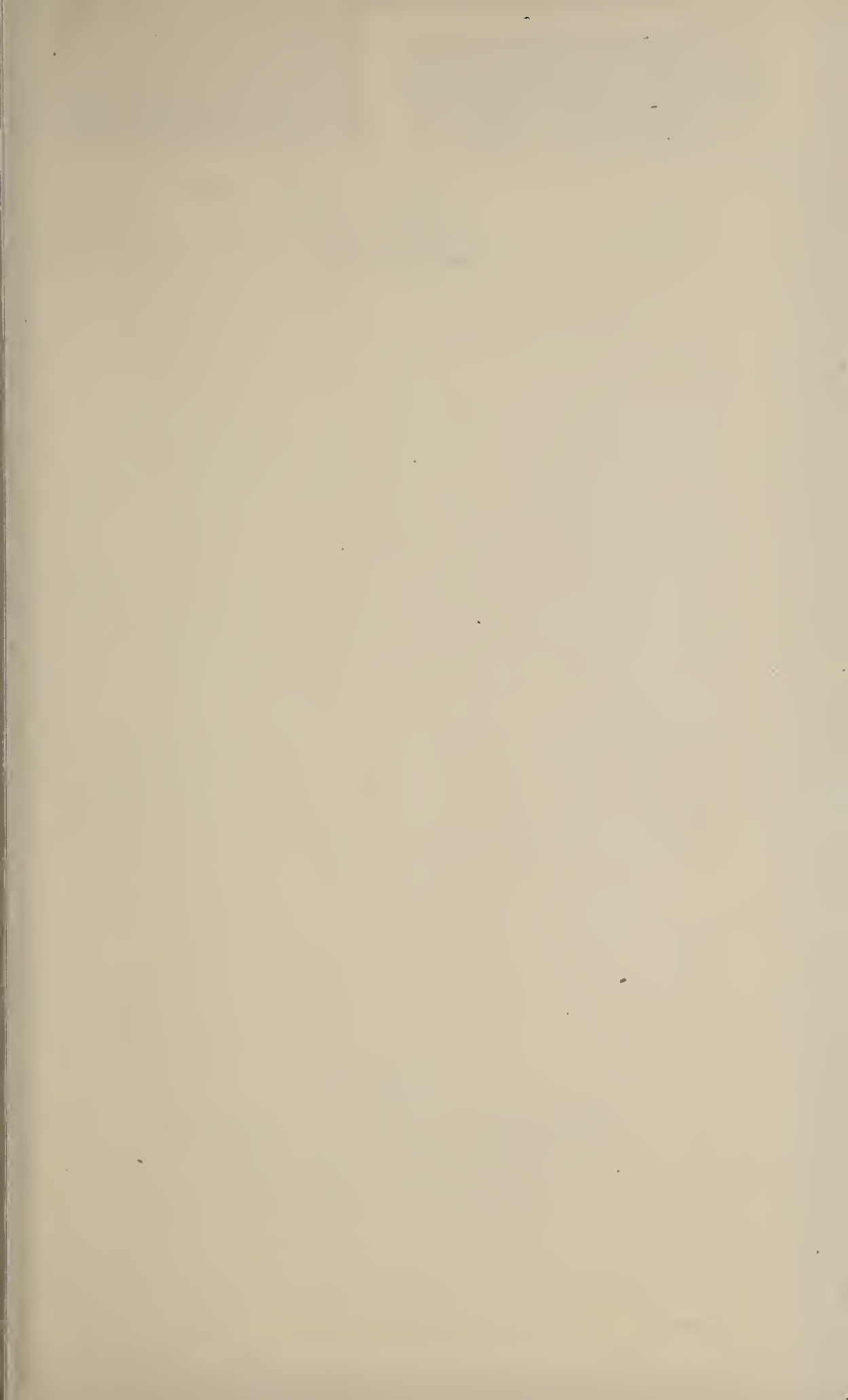
God is but now I see that it reads that "the tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them."

Freeman: And verse 4 makes it still clearer that the holy city, New Jerusalem, is to be located on the new earth which John saw in vision: "And God shall wipe all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." Notice, there shall be no *more* death, sorrow, crying, or pain. This shows that in that location, in that very place there had been death and suffering. These are experiences of earth groaning under sin and the curse. But thank God when the curse is removed and earth made new and the last enemy, which is death, is destroyed then "the former things will be passed away." Now read Rev. 22: 3: "And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it and his servants shall serve him."

Creedman: Well, I must confess that the Bible looks like a new book to me now. I feel that I have been justly rebuked for being blindly led by tradition, and bound by man-made creeds. My dear Bro. Freeman, I wish you to pray for me that I may be true to my convictions, and "walk in the light as he is in the light," and that I may for the time to

come pray with the spirit and with the understanding also, “Thy kingdom come, and thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” Amen.





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